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Opening Historic Museum, Adelaide

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This exhibition and its setting show us what can be done to preserve Adelaide's history and what has not been done. It's fitting that this showing of "Adelaide Views and Panoramas 1837-1976" is the first display in the Museum following its renovation because this building is very much a part of our architectural heritage. As the works on display illustrate, Adelaide's tradition of stone and brick construction produced some beautiful examples of sensitive design and craftsmanship, but the exhibition shows only too well that not enough have been preserved.

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The Duryea panorama of 1870 - this building was three years old then - recorded a city of wood, brick and stone. Adelaide then was a city where people moved on foot - at a more leisurely pace - among buildings which they could look at and appreciate without being overpowered.

If we compare that with John Turner's panorama taken this year from the same position as Duryea's - the top of the Post Office tower - we see a city of cars, tall buildings and car parks, a much more thrusting city. But it is also a city which offers visual relief through the texture and

architectural detail of the buildings which we have preserved.

The Town Hall, the Old Treasury, Edmund Wright House and the G.P.O. give King William Street an elegance and charm which could never be imitated by taller, more streamlined constructions. Many other buildings in King William Street play a similarly important role, by providing architectural styles from our more recent past.

North Terrace is a special treasure. Its collection of Victorian public buildings from the Railway Station through to Royal Adelaide

Hospital is unique. The beauty of each individually is complemented by the others and by the restful shade of the trees and shrubs.

Among the large well known buildings are smaller, but no less valuable, parts of Adelaide's history. The Old Legislative Council looks rather insignificant between Parliament House and the Railway Station, and the old Mounted Police Barracks are tucked away behind the Museum, but their lack of prominence does not diminish their value.

Looking along North Terrace, the four oldest buildings are the most unobtrusive: the

East Wing of Government House, the Barracks, the Legislative Council Building and this Museum.

This Museum building was built in 1867 as the Government Supply Store and over the 109 years since then it has changed its role from the Store to an Army Depot later in the nineteenth century, and then to become the home of the South Australian Archives in 1919, and later part of the South Australian Art Gallery.

It's new role will be to show people part of our history and it will do that not only through the exhibitions held here but through

its own brickwork and stone. It will also show us that historic buildings can be preserved imaginatively and functionally. Adelaide is showing the rest of Australia how to do that - we have preserved Edmund Wright House not as an empty shell or curiosity, but as a working part of the city.

This Museum will be just as much a working part of North Terrace. Its restorations have brought back the architecture of the last century, but its use will be completely contemporary. I hope the Legislative Council Building will be restored to its

past appearance, and become an interpretative centre and museum of South Australia's political and social history.

Too much of our past has been knocked down because no-one with imagination was there to suggest ways of keeping them functional. Adelaide is now much more conscious of its unique architectural history and the people of Adelaide want to save that history.

This Museum is one important building we have been able to preserve. In the last ten weeks, it has been transformed - the dormer windows are back and so is the gabled porch. (Perhaps I might soon see the slates

back on the roof). The Gallery has done an excellent job not only in ensuring that the historical exhibitions have a suitable showplace but also in restoring for the city a small but important part of our past.